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THE FEDERAL LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

AND THE MASSACHUSETTS SELF-HELP PROGRAMS

Revised -- July, 1985

Division of Conservation Services

OVERVIEW

The Division of Conservation Services in the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs administers three programs which assist Massachusetts municipalities in acquiring and/or developing recreation and conservation areas and facilities;

THE FEDERAL LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND, established by Act of Congress, 1965, provides up to 50% reimbursement to states and their political subdivisions for acquisition and development of lands for outdoor recreation.

THE MASSACHUSETTS SELF-HELP PROGRAM, established by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 132A, Section 11, provides up to 80% reimbursement for the acquisition only of conservation lands to communities with conservation commissions duly established under M.G.L. Chapter 40, Section 8C.

THE MASSACHUSETTS URBAN SELF-HELP PROGRAM, established by Chapter 933 of the Acts of 1977, as amended, provides up to 90% reimbursement for the acquisition and development of park and recreational lands to Massachusetts cities and towns with a population of thirty-five thousand which have established park or recreation commissions and conservation commissions. The Secretary of Environmental Affairs may waive the requirement that a town have a population of 35,000 to receive a grant whenever the purpose of the grant is to provide a facility with regional or statewide usage. . .

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To receive assistance through any of these three programs, a municipality must submit to the Division of Conservation Services and obtain approval of a conservation and/or recreation plan prepared or updated within the past five years. The Division of Conservation Services established this planning requirement in 1967 to encourage a systematic method of meeting local and regional conservation, recreation, and open space needs. This booklet details the requirements for these municipal planning documents.

INTRODUCTION TO PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

Several types of planning documents may qualify a municipality to participate in the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund and/or the Massachusetts Self-Help Programs.

1. Conservation and recreation plans which are elements of a comprehensive "master plan" may provide eligibility for all three programs.
2. Joint conservation and recreation plans, prepared through the cooperation of several municipal agencies (e.g. planning board, recreation commission, conservation commission) may provide eligibility for all three programs.
3. Plans prepared by an individual municipal agency (e.g., conservation commission or recreation commission or planning board) or a consultant may provide eligibility for:
 - a. the Self-Help Program (conservation or passive recreation land acquisition), if the content of the plan addresses only conservation issues.

or b. the Land & Water Conservation Fund and the Urban Self-Help

Program (active recreation land acquisition and development...

if the content of the plan addresses only active recreation issues.

or c. all three programs, if the content of the plan addresses both conservation and active recreation issues.

TO INSURE ELIGIBILITY FOR ANY OF THE GRANTS PROGRAMS, A PLAN SUBMITTED TO THE DIVISION OF CONSERVATION SERVICES MUST INCLUDE:

- I. A statement of agency participation and methodology of plan development
- II. Background data on physical, social, and economic factors important to open space and/or recreation policies
- III. A statement of municipal conservation and/or recreation goals and objectives
- IV. An inventory of public, quasi-public, and private (but used by the public) conservation and/or recreation facilities
- V. An analysis and statement of community conservation and/or recreation needs

~~VI. A five-year action program~~

- VII. Written comments on the plan from the local planning board and the regional planning agency

When plans are inadequate in some regard or are more than five years old, communities can attain eligibility by revising and updating their plans; they need not prepare an entirely new plan. Revisions and updates, however, must be accompanied by a written explanation describing how the major additions and changes complement previously submitted documents and by a copy of the previous plan if it is not already on file with the Division of Conservation Services.

All plans submitted to the Division of Conservation Services for approval must fulfill the following technical requirements:

1. Plans must be dated on cover and title page.
2. Copies of plans must be bound.
3. All reproductions must be legible.
4. No partial copies or excerpts from master plans or other documents are acceptable; reports must be submitted in their entirety.
5. Updates must include a copy of previous plan (unless a copy is on file with the Division of Conservation Services).
6. If a plan refers to other planning documents for essential information, these documents must accompany the conservation and/or recreation plan submitted.
7. All plans must include a map of conservation and recreation lands and a copy of any other maps referred to for essential information in the plan.

~~In addition, it is suggested that the format of plans submitted to the~~
Division of Conservation Services for approval follow the planning requirements
as presented ~~herein~~.

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Statement of Agency Participation

This section should clearly cite the agencies which participated in developing the plan and should indicate the extent of their participation in the planning process. Such agencies might include the recreation commission and/or conservation commission, the local planning board, the regional planning agency, and any citizen group such as watershed, conservation, or park associations. The methodology used in developing the plan should also be clearly explained here should include a description of group input into the plan and of any questionnaires used or public hearing held to facilitate development of the plan.

Background Information

The background information must delineate the significant natural, social, and economic factors which affect the community's natural resources and recreation needs. Maps, graphs, and other illustrations may be used to highlight this part of the planning document. The emphasis should be on how natural, social, and economic factors relate to conservation and recreation policy, rather than on a lengthy description of the factors themselves. For example, such physical characteristics of a municipality as soils, topography and climate may dictate what kinds of conservation and recreation activities are possible there. Likewise, social factors such as population density and personal income levels may reflect recreation interest or demand in terms of how much time and money people can and do spend on certain activities. Such factors may also affect the demand on natural resources and the development pressures of an area. Background information can be found in the municipality's monograph prepared by the Department of Commerce and Development, 100 Cambridge Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02202 and may also be obtained from the United States Census, the

Massachusetts Census, the municipality's master plan (if one exists) and from the regional planning agency.

Factors to be considered in the background information section are:

1. Physical Characteristics

- a. topography
- b. soils and vegetation
- c. water resources
- d. wildlife
- e. unique features
- f. Climate

2. Population

- a. absolute number (past, present, future projections)
- b. special groups within the community (e.g. ethnic, handicapped, elderly, youth, disadvantaged)
- c. Population density (persons per square mile, broken down by sub-areas if significant variation exists)

3. Personal income levels

4. Land use patterns

5. Transportation networks

6. Water supply and sewage disposal systems

Goals and Objectives

The community's goals and objectives for the protection of their natural resources and the provision of recreational opportunities are to be set forth in this section. In this context, "goals" are the long range aspirations of the municipality and "objectives" are specific, measurable actions to be taken in order to incrementally achieve long range goals.

The relationship of natural resources and recreation goals and objectives to housing, employment, transportation and other community goals for the location of future growth should be made explicit through an analysis and discussion of proposed land uses and their impact on the social and economic conditions of the community. Open space planning should be coordinated with local planning for water resources, community housing, schools, employment opportunities, transportation and economic development. Conservation/recreation plans should be consistent with local, regional and state growth policy goals.

The development of goals and objectives should incorporate the opinions of the local citizenry and municipal agencies as well as the needs and desires of the region and the Commonwealth. Local interest may be ascertained through public opinion surveys of open space desires and/or recreation activity preferences, and through open hearings or meetings directed specifically toward conservation and/or recreation issues. Regional and state interests are discussed in reports published by the regional planning agencies and in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) published by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management. Published open space and/or recreation facilities standards may also be used to develop conservation and/or recreation goals and objectives.

Following are some examples of conservation/recreation goals and objectives:

GOALS

1. protection of water resources*

OBJECTIVES

- a. preserve watershed in certain areas
- b. identify and protect wetlands
- c. protect existing future well sites*

~~preservation of open space, scenic~~ ~~a. establish critical zones and~~

areas, and rare plant and animal

protect them

species habitat

b. develop brochure to publicize

importance of a unique area

3. integration of recreation and

a. develop trails to link a conser-

vation activities

vation area with an active

recreation area

b. ascertain citizen demand for

hiking areas; improve existing

facilities and provide new ones

where appropriate

4. provision of a balanced recreation

a. develop summer recreation program

~~for the winter~~

b. create winter sports activities

areas

* shall be consistent with the state's water supply policies and regulations as

adopted by the Water Resources Commission within the Executive Office of

Environmental Affairs; focus in Action Program primarily on how to complement

open space use with water supply management and protection.

Inventory

This section must summarize the current supply of recreation and natural resources areas and facilities within the municipality. Categories to be covered include:

1. forest and wood area
2. land and water areas important for conservation purposes e.g. water recharge areas, flood plains, etc.
3. sites with significant natural features such as, rare species habitats or other important ecological or geological features
4. parks and recreation sites and facilities
5. other sites often used for multiple purpose open spaces such as school grounds, town commons, or park areas associated with a particular industrial complex; historical areas
6. agricultural land, especially farmland that is currently assessed or is eligible for assessment under M.G.L. Chapter 61A, the Farmland Assessment Act, and farmland protected by Chapter 780, Acts of 1977, the

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The inventory should list all public (federal, state, and municipal), quasi-public, and private (but used by the public) conservation/recreation sites. For each parcel the acreage, form of ownership, current zoning, and agency responsible for management should be specified. With primarily recreational sites, the quality of facilities and type of activities should be listed as well as information regarding their seasonal use and the size and geographic distribution of their participant populations. Any special legal

measures that have been taken to protect the public interest in the site must also be noted. Such special protective arrangement may include:

1. special zoning, i.e., floodplain, conservancy district, or historic district zoning
2. special regulations, i.e., wetlands protection regulations
3. special deed restrictions and easements, i.e., conservation restrictions, public access easements, wetlands restrictions

At least one clear map, delineating conservation and/or recreation lands, must be included in the plan. Such a map, however, is not to be considered a substitute for a proper list of conservation and/or recreation lands.

Much of the data required in this inventory has already been assembled by various public and private agencies such as your regional planning agency, Conservation District, U.S. Soil Conservation Service or the Department of Environmental Management Planning Staff and Division of Water Resources (Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, 100 Cambridge Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02202). The Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Recreational Vehicles, Natural Heritage Program staff also would be an excellent source of information for locating rare species habitats and significant natural communities. They may be reached at 100 Cambridge Street, Boston, Massachusetts, also.

Community Needs

This section must assess present and projected conservation and/or recreation needs by comparing existing facilities and current demand for use with the goals and objectives and projected demand for facilities. It is impor-

tant that this evaluation reflect the unique characteristics of the community as highlighted in the background data. Some important considerations are:

1. What deficiencies exist in neighborhood open space?
2. How secure are the existing legal protections of natural resources areas, such as agricultural lands, rare species habitat, etc?
3. Will recreation activities be radically different in the future?
4. Do handicapped persons have equal access to community facilities?
5. Are the operation and maintenance programs properly staffed?
6. Do recreation facilities satisfy the needs of special age groups and ethnic populations?
7. Are water resources adequately protected?
8. How does existing open space meet the demands of the present and projected population according to state (SCORP) and national (National Park Service) standards?

Action Program

A five-year action program specifies the conservation and/or recreation priorities for the municipality year by year but need not be site specific. The following topics should be included in an action program.

1. Areas or sites to be acquired, controlled, or protected by:
 - a. fee simple acquisition
 - b. deed easements and restrictions
 - c. special zoning and other regulatory measures
 - d. other means
2. Facilities to be developed or rehabilitated
3. Programs to be provided

4. Operation and maintenance activities

5. Funding sources:

- a. municipal fiscal capacity (including priority of open space and/or recreation in the budget)
- b. federal and state (by name of funding program)
- c. local or other

Written Comments on the Plan

The conservation and/or recreation plan must be reviewed by all participating agencies as well as any other agency which may be affected by the report. Their written comments, submitted with the plan, will provide evidence of interagency cooperation.

Comments from the local planning board and the regional planning agency must accompany the plan. In addition, comments from the public obtained at meetings or hearings on the plan should be included when available as well as comments from the principal governing body of the municipality and the conservation and recreation commission. Negative opinions should not be excluded.

Common misconceptions regarding the planning requirements:

1. Natural Resource Planning Program or Natural Resource Inventory is submitted instead of a plan -

While important components of a plan, these reports are not by themselves a valid plan

2. Action plan is missing-

Document that lacks an action plan is missing a method of implementation; this is a serious deficiency.

3. A zap is submitted to fulfill the plan requirement:-

a zap is not a plan; a zap supports a plan.

PLAN CHECK-OFF LIST

Statement of Participation and Methodology

- ☐ agencies
- ☐ special associations
- ☐ citizens

Background Information

- ☐ physical characteristics
 - ☐ topography
 - ☐ soils and vegetation
 - ☐ water resources
 - ☐ wildlife
 - ☐ unique features
 - ☐ climate
- ☐ population
 - ☐ absolute numbers
 - ☐ special groups
 - ☐ population density
- ☐ personal income levels
- ☐ land use patterns
- ☐ transportation networks
- ☐ water supply and sewage disposal systems

Goals and Objectives

- ☐ conservation goals and objectives
- ☐ recreation goals and objectives
- ☐ method used to develop goals and objectives

Inventory

- ☐ recreation land
- ☐ conservation land
- ☐ prime agricultural land
- For all land inventoried:
 - ☐ size of parcels
 - ☐ form of ownership
 - ☐ current zoning
 - ☐ agency responsible for management
 - ☐ special legal restrictions or regulations
 - ☐ types of activities
 - ☐ quality of facilities
 - ☐ seasonal use
 - ☐ number of participants
 - ☐ participant geographic distribution
- ☐ map of conservation/and or recreation lands

Analysis of Needs

- ☐ conservation needs
- ☐ recreation needs
- ☐ special user group needs
- ☐ municipal and neighborhood needs

Five Year Action Program

- ☐ priorities defined
 - ☐ areas or sites to be
 - ☐ acquired, protected, etc.
 - ☐ facilities to be developed
 - ☐ programs to be provided
- ☐ operation and maintenance problems
- ☐ funding sources
 - ☐ municipal fiscal capacity
 - ☐ federal or state sources
 - ☐ (by name)
 - ☐ local or other

Written Comments

- ☐ planning board
- ☐ regional planning agency
- ☐ other



